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ABSTRACT

This brief article presents some of the facts and figures learned from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). NAEP is an on-going nationwide survey to determine what America's students are learning. It is conducted by the Educational Testing Service, and, at the time this article was written, was funded by the National Institute of Education (NIE). Since 1969, when NAEP began, more than 1 million 9-, 13-, and 17-year-olds have been tested in 10 different subject areas, including reading, writing, math, and science. The test results give the nation an idea of what its students know or do not know, and what they can or cannot do. NAEP contains a wealth of information which can be of help to educators. In an effort to make these findings available to more individuals, NIE developed an easy-to-use computer program dubbed National Assessment of Educational Progress Information Retrieval System (NAEPIRS). This program offers educators an opportunity to see how their schools are performing compared to others across the country. The program requires an IBM personal computer and a NAEPIRS diskette. (Instructions for obtaining the diskette are included in this brief.) (JAZ)

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RESEARCH IN BRIEF

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NAEP Findings at Your Fingertips

Seventeen-year-olds are not as interested in science as they used to be.

* * *

Most teen-agers (two thirds or more) do no homework or less than one hour per night.

* * *

Students believe reading is important and say they enjoy it "somewhat." However, of the students surveyed, less than half of the 13- and 17-year-olds say they enjoy reading very much.

* * *

This is only a small sample of what educators have learned from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), an on-going, nationwide survey to determine what America's students are learning.

Every year billions of dollars are spent on education in the United States, but very little is known about the effectiveness of this expense. NAEP gives educators, policymakers, and parents an idea of what they are getting for their money -- in other words what this country's students are learning. It is, in effect, the nation's report card.

Since 1969, when NAEP began, more than 1 million 9-, 13-, and 17-year-olds have been tested in 10 different subject areas, including reading, writing, math, and science. The test results give the nation an idea of what its students know or don't know, and what they can or cannot do.

NAEP is funded by the National Institute of Education (NIE), the research branch of the U. S. Department of Education. The NAEP assessment is conducted by the Educational Testing Service of Princeton, N. J.

NAEP contains a wealth of information which can be of tremendous help to educators. In an effort to make these findings available to more individuals, NIE has developed an easy-to-use computer program which makes NAEP findings immediately available.

The program, dubbed NAEPIRS (pronounced nape-ers) -- National Assessment of Educational Progress Information Retrieval System -- contains more than 800 findings from NAEP data.

NAEPIRS has been designed so that users can ask for findings according to subject or age group; look for trends or attitudes; or compare findings between groups such as rural and urban students, males and females, students of different races, etc.

Here are some examples of the findings NAEPIRS contains:

-- About 10 percent of the surveyed students at each age do not read at all in their spare time.

-- Those 9-year-olds indicating they had not attended kindergarten performed 14 percentage points below the national average in reading.

-- Nine-year-olds who indicated that they watched television daily for up to three or four hours performed 5 percentage points above the nation on the reading comprehension exercises.

* * *

All you need in order to use NAEPIRS is an IBM personal computer and a NAEPIRS diskette, which NIE will provide at no cost. To use the program,

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simply insert the diskette into the computer and follow the step-by-step instructions which appear on the computer screen. The directions are easy enough for a computer novice to follow.

The program contains 37 "descriptors" or characteristics you may want information about. Choose the descriptors which meet your needs and program that information into the computer. If you want information on reading, for example, the computer will search its database for all the information available on reading. It will then indicate how many findings it has on this subject. If you want to narrow down the subject, you can request reading findings for 9-year-olds in urban schools. The findings will appear on the screen and can be printed.

NAEPIRS is significant because for the first time educators and others interested in education can retrieve NAEP findings quickly and easily. NAEPIRS offers local and state school superintendents an opportunity to see how their schools are performing compared to others across the country. It gives legislators a chance to see what students are learning and to make budget or policy decisions accordingly.

To obtain a NAEPIRS diskette free of charge, send a self-addressed mailing label and a double-sided, double-density system formatted diskette. NIE encourages individuals to make copies of the disk and further distribute it to those interested. Mail your request to NAEPIRS, Testing, Assessment, and Evaluation Division, Teaching and Learning Program, National Institute of Education, 1200 -19th Street, N. W., Mail Stop 9, Washington, D. C. 20208.

For more information about other NIE programs, please contact Kay McKinney or Laurie Maxwell, 202/254-7900.

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